

Los Padres National Forest



2014 Figueroa Wildflower Report

Greetings and happy spring.

I realize that you have all been waiting for a Figueroa Wildflower Update; however, I hate to report that there really isn't much to write about this season. Due to the drought that we are experiencing, the wildflowers are few and far between. I was holding off writing this hoping that the minimal amount of rain we received a month ago might bring us some wildflowers, unfortunately, the wildflowers that we did get are few and nothing compared to years with more rain. The lush, beautiful carpets of poppies and lupine are non-existent this year (see picture above). Both of these photos were taken from the hillside on Figueroa Mountain Road which is located just beyond Catway Road. The first picture was taken a year ago around this time. The second picture was taken a week ago. These spectacular displays need rain in December and January, as well as snow/frost in order for the seeds to germinate and create the gorgeous, colorful carpets that we so much enjoy. This year, we had none.

There are scattered wildflowers throughout the mountain, but they are small and not many of them. I have been looking for some of the popular varieties, such as the chocolate lilies and mariposa lilies, but they never did materialize. The chocolate lily plant came out, but the flowers never did. Shooting stars were scarce and tiny with only 3 to 5 flowers per stem and extremely short lived with their blooms lasting only a week or so.

A few late season wildflowers bloomed in early March, but there was only a handful and extremely short lived. This is common during a drought year, as these plants try to get the little moisture that is available to them before it goes away.

Some fields are starting to fill in with goldfields, but I have noticed that they, too, last but a short time.

Ranger Peak to Cachuma Saddle is where one will find the most colorful area. There are quite a few bush poppies blooming along this south facing slope along with some monkey flowers. Along the midway portion of this road, the bush lupines are also in bloom on both sides of the road, creating a lovely stretch. However, unlike years with more rain, the bush lupines are only about 2 feet tall, when normally they are about 4 feet. The blooms range from 6 to 10 inches, rather than their usual 12 to 18. The one thing that the lack of rain did not affect is their glorious aroma.

Another lovely location is the area where the old Cachuma Campground used to be. Since this area is nestled next to a year round running creek, one will find a generous amount of fiesta flowers blooming in the shaded areas beneath the oaks. In the sunny field, paralleled to the creek, fiesta flowers and poppies can be found. As you head out of this area, Indian paintbrush is also in bloom.

I truly regret not being able to provide a better update, but as you can see, nature just didn't cooperate this year. In the event that we suddenly get an influx of wildflowers, I will send out another update, if not, let's hope for much needed rain this coming winter and a beautiful, flower filled spring next year.



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